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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASUNCION 000650

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/BSC
NSC FOR KIM BREIER
TREASURY FOR OSIA MAUREEN WAFER
TREASURY FOR OTA WARFIELD, VAN KOCH, MILLAR
SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD DAN JOHNSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/12/2015
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [PA](#)
SUBJECT: PARAGUAY: ATTORNEY GENERAL ON PUBLIC SECURITY
CHALLENGES

Classified By: Polcoun James P. Merz for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary. The Ambassador met with Attorney General Oscar Latorre to discuss U.S. assistance to Paraguay to address its security concerns. Latorre lamented the scope of the problems Paraguay faces, particularly in terms of corruption within the police. He was keen to win our backing for his plan to create a corps of 100 police working directly for his office in support of criminal investigations, but lukewarm about the conduct of a workshop sponsored by the U.S. Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies (CHDS), perhaps out of concern it would auger ill for plans to augment his own office. End Summary.

U.S. Assistance Efforts

2. (U) On 5/9, the Ambassador briefed Latorre on U.S. plans to conduct an assessment 6/13-6/17 to lay the groundwork for follow-on anti-terrorist assistance (ATA) training in handling kidnapping cases as well as host a workshop for key GOP leaders to develop a plan to confront Paraguay's public security challenges. Vice-President Castiglioni supports these initiatives and will be traveling to the U.S. to discuss the workshop CHDS will sponsor aiming to produce a more comprehensive, coordinated GOP security plan. U.S. follow on support efforts would be considered based on the conclusions derived from the workshop.

Latorre Decries GOP's Inability to Confront Challenges

3. (C) Latorre lamented at length the multiplicity of challenges Paraguay faces in terms of vision, organization, and capacity in confronting its security problems.

-- No one in Paraguay was capable of diagnosing the facts of Paraguay's security problem, much less the causes. The police dishonestly argue that crime is on the decline though this flies directly in the face of his office's experience in prosecuting crimes. The police deny the existence of this problem to avoid corrective measures.

-- Infighting amongst the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of government was the norm, making it practically impossible to produce consensus on a plan of action.

-- Widespread, endemic corruption within police ranks undermined prospects for implementing any coherent plan. To illustrate, he maintained that police district chiefs are required to raise 500 million guarani/month (over USD 80,000) -- no questions asked -- for delivery to police headquarters lest they be reassigned to inhospitable areas. Separately, he remarked that a hard-drive containing the building plans for the Public Ministry had disappeared calling into question the reliability of the police who are directly responsible for protecting such items.

4. (C) Latorre linked Paraguay's kidnapping problem directly to Patria Libre, the leftist political party behind the kidnapping and murder of Cecilia Cubas. In response to the Ambassador's query, he qualified that only a "few" members of the party, and not its entire structure, were committed to kidnapping as a way to raise funds and send a political message. Nonetheless, the links these members had with the FARC as evidenced by email traffic and personal meetings abroad was very worrying. Paraguay had evidence of party members' involvement in a recent failed kidnapping attempt and plans for future kidnappings.

5. (C) For lack of trust in the integrity and capacity of the police to investigate crimes, prosecutors essentially investigate their own cases rather than rely on the police. Latorre conjectured that Paraguay could well be better off destroying its entire police structure and starting from scratch but lacked the resources and the political will to take such a drastic course. Instead, he advocated the

creation of a special unit of police working within the Attorney General's office at the behest of prosecutors to investigate crimes. Paraguay would solicit U.S. assistance in terms of vetting, internal controls, and better salaries.

Latorre Cool on CHDS Workshop

16. (C) Ambassador stressed the value the GOP could derive from a CHDS workshop aiming to produce a coordinated action plan based on a realistic assessment of the challenges Paraguay faces as well as its access to finite resources. A comparable exercise in Panama and Peru had proven constructive and useful. Latorre was not enthusiastic. He worried that the exercise would produce a plan that was beyond Paraguay's ability to implement on a political and financial level. He repeatedly returned to the need to create a special unit within his office to investigate crimes. He only desisted in his negative take on the workshop once the Ambassador signaled support, in principle, for the utility of creating a corps of vetted investigators.

17. (C) Comment: Latorre is pessimistic about the GOP's ability to meet its security challenges. He considers creation of a corps of vetted police investigators working at the bidding of prosecutors as key to addressing serious concerns about police corruption. His reluctance to a CHDS workshop appeared inspired by concern it would undermine prospects for creation of this corps.

18. (C) It is worth recalling that Latorre's term expires in August. Agreement to replacing him figured large in a recent pact between the ruling Colorado Party and several other political parties to gain a majority in the Senate. We do not rule out that Paraguayan political machinations could rejuvenate Latorre's prospects for another five year term. Regardless of who the Attorney General is, however, overcoming the institutional distrust of the Attorney General's Office for the police and other law enforcement and investigative entities will prove essential for the effective implementation of any security plan . End Comment.
KEANE